

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

NSC BRIEFING

8 October 1957

THE DJILAS AFFAIR

- I. The Yugoslav government on 5 October sentenced Milovan Djilas, president Tito's former partisan crony, to seven years for "hostile propaganda."
- A. A major charge in Djilas' indictment alleges that his recent book The New Class was utilized by the West for a planned campaign against Yugoslavia.
- B. The New Class, written during 1955-6 and smuggled out of Yugoslavia, attacks Communism as a form of despotism and its rulers as careerists (the "new class") who exercise the most sweeping form of totalitarian power in history. It asserts that Communism is doomed and that the "class" has already begun to split into factions.
- C. The Yugoslav press has devoted considerably more space to the current case than it did to Djilas' two previous trials (1955 and 1956); the leading newspaper, Borba, has published excerpts from the book.
- D. Presumably there is emotional support for Djilas within Yugoslavia among some party intellectuals. His earlier career as a violent communist reformer is too well remembered for him to have any popular support. Although there is no evidence of organized popular support now, Tito may fear that Djilas' liberal views may become more attractive to the predominantly anti-Soviet Yugoslavs as the Belgrade-Moscow rapprochement develops.

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1. The New Class, while banned in Yugoslavia, has undoubtedly been widely read within the party hierarchy.
 2. The American embassy has reported that local interest has been high. There has been a rush on newstands for material covering the trial. Local anti-regime contacts who were hitherto unsympathetic to Djilas now call him "philosopher."
- E. Djilas' conviction provides evidence for Tito's associates within the Communist world as well as at home that although Tito may have unorthodox ties with the West, he remains strong defender of Communism.
- F. Yugoslav foreign office official Ivkovic admitted that there had been Soviet pressure to try Djilas, but he added that some elements in party had opposed trial for fear of hostile Western reaction.

II. There are other indications that pro-Western sentiment is causing concern within the top leadership.

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A. [redacted]

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[redacted] a crisis

could develop in the government over the pro-Soviet policies Tito is now pursuing.

- B. Yugoslav association with the West since the break with the USSR in 1948 has been, despite efforts to the contrary, conducive to the spread of Western influence within the Yugoslav party.
- C. The postponement until next April of the 7th Party Congress--scheduled for this November--strongly hints at confusion within party ranks.